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Former CIA chief blasts MX in Mercersburg talk

By BOB LaMENDOLA

MERCERSBURG, Pa. — The MX missile, and especially the "dense pack" system President Reagan has proposed to base it, are "absolutely not" smart strategy or a smart way to spend money, a former CIA director said Monday night.

The giant land-based MX is vulnerable, fast becoming outdated, far too costly and will antagonize the Soviet Union, former CIA chief Stansfield Turner told about 650 Mercersburg Academy students.

"Not only is it imprudent and wasting your money and mine, it is dangerous," said Turner, CIA director under Jimmy Carter from 1977 until Reagan fired him. "You and I don't want the U.S. and the Soviet Union to be constantly sitting with their fingers on the trigger."

Although Reagan calls the MX the "Peacekeeper," Turner said its mere presence will make the Soviets suspect the U.S. may someday use it, and make them more defensive. Turner said that will not pave the way for arms control, which he said he favors.

"Reducing numbers (of warheads) is good but it is not the end objective," he said. "Reducing numbers doesn't reduce the likelihood of using them."

Turner said if he were advising Reagan today, he would suggest the \$30 billion MX pricetag — which will probably end up at \$90 billion — be used for a small amount of Cruise missile research and to reduce the federal deficit.

Also, he disputed a Reagan contention that packing the MX missiles in a 14-mile strip in Wyoming makes them less vulnerable to Soviet attack. "Whatever can be seen can be hit by today's technology," he said.

The Cruise missile is faster, more easily hidden, smaller and carries more firepower than the MX, he said.

In his hour-long talk to the students, Turner also said:

- New Soviet Chairman Yuri V. Andropov is taking control faster than expected but needs at least several years to win a firm base of support. Therefore, Turner said, he foresees a "rocky period" when little progress is possible for arms control.

- Turner's CIA goofed in not realizing that trouble — and a potential hostage situation — was brewing in Iran. "We knew the shah had all this police and military power. We assumed when all this opposition built up, he would step in and crack it in the head. He didn't and we'll never know why."

- The U.S. should have been able to figure out that the Japanese would attack Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. "All the information was there," he said. "Our right hand and left hand were keeping secrets from each other." Turner was a naval officer before former classmate Carter picked him for the CIA job.

Turner said he now writes, lectures and has a consulting business. His son is a 1967 graduate of Mercersburg Academy.